

## REL Southwest Ask A REL Response

January 2021

English Learners

### Question:

*What literature exists on identifying English learner students for gifted and talented programs, or on their experience in gifted and talented programs?*

### Response:

Thank you for the question you submitted to our REL Reference Desk. We have prepared the following memo with research references to help answer your question. For each reference, we provide an abstract, excerpt, or summary written by the study's author or publisher. Following an established Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest research protocol, we conducted a search for research reports as well as descriptive study articles on literature that exists on identifying English learner students for gifted and talented programs, as well as on their experience in gifted and talented programs.

We have not evaluated the quality of references and the resources provided in this response. We offer them only for your reference. Also, we searched the references in the response from the most commonly used resources of research, but they are not comprehensive, and other relevant references and resources may exist. References provided are listed in sections with sources in each section in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance. We do not include sources that are not freely available to the requestor.

### Research References

Brice, A. E., Shaunessy, E., Hughes, C., McHatton, P. A., & Ratliff, M. A. (2008). What language discourse tells us about bilingual adolescents: A study of students in gifted programs and students in general education programs. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 32(1), 7–33. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ810677>

*From the ERIC abstract:* “The Latino/a population of the United States continues to increase dramatically; consequently, educators face the challenge of how best to provide educational services for those whose primary language is Spanish. The purpose of this study was to examine student discourse between bilingual students in gifted programs and bilingual students in the general education programs in an urban middle school. This study suggests a minor language advantage for the bilingual students in the gifted

program. The overall conclusion seems to indicate that bilingualism, language abilities, and giftedness involve many variables and that the relationships are not necessarily direct.”

Briggs, C. J., Reis, S. M., & Sullivan, E. E. (2008). A national view of promising programs and practices for culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse gifted and talented students. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 52(2), 131–145. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ789290>. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237969834>

*From the abstract:* “The low representation of culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse (CLED) and high-poverty students in gifted and talented programs has long been an area of concern. This qualitative study investigated methods to increase successful participation of CLED students in gifted programs across the nation. Twenty-five programs were selected for inclusion in the study. Of those, 7 programs were selected for in-depth site visits that included interviews with administrators and teachers, as well as observations. Data suggested five categories that contributed to the successful identification and participation of CLED students in gifted programs. These categories included modified identification procedures; program support systems, such as front-loading (identifying high-potential children and providing opportunities for advanced work prior to formal identification); selecting curriculum/instructional designs that enable CLED students to succeed; building parent/home connections; and using program evaluation practices designed to highlight avenues to CLED students’ success.”

Ford, D. Y., Grantham, T. C., & Whiting, G. W. (2008). Culturally and linguistically diverse students in gifted education: Recruitment and retention issues. *Exceptional Children*, 74(3), 289–306. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ817537>. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268744447>

*From the ERIC abstract:* “The field of gifted education has faced criticism about the underrepresentation of African American, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) in its programs. This article proposes that efforts targeting both recruitment and retention barriers are essential to remedying this disparity. Educators' deficit thinking about CLD students underlies both areas (recruitment and retention) and contributes to underrepresentation in significant, meaningful ways. The authors examine factors hindering the recruitment and retention of CLD students in gifted education, attending in particular to definitions and theories, testing, and referral issues, and offer recommendations for improving the representation of CLD students in gifted education.”

Gubbins, E. J., Siegle, D., Hamilton, R., Peters, P., Carpenter, A. Y., O'Rourke, P., Puryear, J., McCoach, D. B., Long, D., Bloomfield, E., Cross, K., Mun, R. U., Amspaugh, C., Langley, S. D., Roberts, A., & Estepar-Garcia, W. (2018). *Exploratory study on the identification of English learners for gifted and talented programs*. University of Connecticut, National Center for Research on Gifted Education. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED602388>

*From the ERIC abstract:* “English learners (ELs) are the fastest growing population of learners in the United States; however, despite the growing numbers of ELs, their

representation in gifted identification and programming continues to lag behind not only traditional populations of learners from advantaged communities, but also other underserved populations of learners. We visited 16 elementary and middle schools across the three states, selected because they were exemplary in their identification of gifted ELs. The NCRGE team conducted group and individual interviews with a total of 225 administrators; district gifted coordinators; gifted specialists; classroom teachers; parents/guardians/caretakers; and school psychologists or counselors, yielding a total of 84 transcripts. Group and individual interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed. Our research findings led to the following recommendations for review and reflection for stakeholders involved in designing and implementing gifted and talented programs: (a) Adopt a policy of universal screening of all students in one or more grade levels for the identification process. (b) Create alternative pathways to identification, allowing schools to use a variety of different assessment instruments (including native language ability and achievement assessments and reliable and valid nonverbal ability assessments) and to apply flexible criteria to ensure that students' talents and abilities are recognized. (c) Establish a web of communication to ensure that all stakeholders (administrators, district gifted coordinators, classroom teachers, gifted specialists, psychologists, multilingual teachers, and parents/guardians/caretakers) are aware of the identification system in its entirety and are empowered to interact with one another in all components. (d) View professional development as a lever for change, providing information to gifted specialists, classroom teachers, psychologists, and parents/guardians/caretakers on identifying giftedness in multiple ways and creating a school climate with the goal of identifying students' strengths rather than weaknesses."

Lohman, D. F., Korb, K. A., & Lakin, J. M. (2008). Identifying academically gifted English-language learners using nonverbal tests: A comparison of the Raven, NNAT, and CogAT. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 52(4), 275–296. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ809671>. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237374957>

*From the abstract:* "In this study, the authors compare the validity of three nonverbal tests for the purpose of identifying academically gifted English-language learners (ELLs). Participants were 1,198 elementary children (approximately 40% ELLs). All were administered the Raven Standard Progressive Matrices (Raven), the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT), and Form 6 of the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). Results show that the U.S. national norms for the Raven substantially overestimate the number of high-scoring children; that because of errors in norming, the NNAT overestimates the number of both high-scoring and low-scoring children; that primary-level ELL children score especially poorly on the NNAT; that the standard error of measurement was twice as large for the NNAT as for the Raven or the CogAT; that ELL children scored 0.5 to 0.67 standard deviations lower than non-ELL children on the three nonverbal tests; and that none of the nonverbal tests predict achievement for ELL students very well."

Mun, R. U., Langley, S. D., Ware, S., Gubbins, E. J., Siegle, D., Callahan, C. M., McCoach, D. B., & Hamilton, R. (2016) *Effective practices for identifying and serving English learners in gifted education: A systematic review of literature*. University of Connecticut, National Center for Research on Gifted Education. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED602387>

*From the ERIC abstract:* “While the number of English Learners (ELs) continues to grow rapidly in the United States, corresponding proportions of ELs are not found in gifted and talented education programs across the nation. The underrepresentation of ELs in gifted programs is both a societal and a research problem. This report presents the results of a systematic review of the literature related to the most effective practices used to identify and serve ELs for gifted education services. We examined and categorized a final selection of 45 theoretical and empirical articles under four major themes: nomination, screening/assessment, services, and identification models. Implications and areas of future research are discussed.”

Smith, N. P. (2018). Strategies for success: Gifted students from diverse cultural backgrounds reflect on what matters most. *Excellence in Education Journal*, 7(2), 42–68.  
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1208698>

*From the ERIC abstract:* “This study was conducted to investigate factors which contribute to the success of gifted students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and low socio-economic backgrounds. Participants were 63 graduates of a secondary gifted and talented program in an urban school district. The graduates’ perspectives were examined through the use of questionnaires. Resilience and coping strategies were among the contributing factors for the participants’ success in gifted programs and after high school graduation. Further, increased exposure to and involvement with technology and community service programs also heightened students’ ability to persevere and positively persist in the workforce. The results lead to instructional implications and recommendations for fostering success for all students from different cultural, linguistic, and low socio-economic backgrounds.”

## Additional Organization to Consult

National Center for Research on Gifted Education – <https://ncrge.uconn.edu/>

*From the website:* “Policymakers, educators, and parents want assurance that all of the nation’s gifted and talented students receive instruction that is sufficiently challenging and that will allow these students to reach their full potential. Unfortunately, two crucial issues continue to plague gifted education: (1) Underrepresented populations continue to be under identified as gifted and underserved by programs for the gifted. (2) Research on best-practice interventions for gifted students and outcomes of gifted programs and services is sparse.”

Also available: *15 tips for identifying gifted EL students* – <https://ncrge.uconn.edu/el-tips/>

“EL students often are under-represented in gifted and talented programs. The National Center for Research on Gifted Education (NCRGE) developed these 15 tips for identifying gifted EL students. The tips are based on NCRGE research findings from visiting schools that have a record of successfully identifying EL students for their gifted programs. In addition to providing a one-page tip sheet that can easily be reproduced for distribution, the NCRGE also offers an attractive tri-fold as well as the full report [that is,

the Gubbins et al. (2018) reference in the previous section] detailing the research supporting the identification tips.”

## Methods

### Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- (“gifted and talented identification”) AND (“English Language Learners” OR “ELs” OR “EL students”)
- [(“gifted and talented”) AND (“accommodations for ELL students”)]
- (“gifted” AND “English Language Learners”)

### Databases and Resources

We searched [ERIC](#) for relevant, peer-reviewed research references. ERIC is a free online library of more than 1.8 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Additionally, we searched the [What Works Clearinghouse](#).

### Reference Search and Selection Criteria

When we were searching and reviewing resources, we considered the following criteria:

- *Date of the publication:* References and resources published from 2005 to present were included in the search and review.
- *Search priorities of reference sources:* Search priority is given to study reports, briefs, and other documents that are published and/or reviewed by IES and other federal or federally funded organizations, academic databases, including ERIC, EBSCO databases, JSTOR database, PsychInfo, PsychArticle, and Google Scholar.
- *Methodology:* The following methodological priorities/considerations were given in the review and selection of the references: (a) study types—randomized control trials, quasi-experiments, correlational studies, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, mixed methods analyses, and so forth; (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected, and so forth), study duration, and so forth; and (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, and so forth.

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This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by stakeholders in the Southwest Region (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest at AIR. This memorandum was prepared by REL Southwest under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-91990018C0002, administered by AIR. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.